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## Problems, survival and transformation: religious education in Scotland – a historical review, 1962-1992

This paper is an examination of the history of Scottish Religious Education (RE). Focusing on 1962-1992, it distinguishes the temporal processes that unfolded during this period to identify the circumstances that led to a serious case of neglect of the subject, particularly in the non-denominational sector. Next, it highlights the less emphasised but important issue of how RE 'survived' in public education, on to explicating antecedents towards a paradigm shift in the subject. Finally, curriculum reforms undertaken in the subject from the 1980s onwards are described, showing how these reforms helped to transform Scottish RE into an 'academic' subject well-aligned with the curricular principles of the 5-14, the country's first (1992) 'educational' RE programme.

**Keywords:** Religious education; history of underdevelopment; structural reforms

### Introduction

"... Religious instruction tends to stick out like a sore thumb."<sup>1</sup> So mused Lord Aberdare in November 1967, during a protracted parliamentary debate in the House of Lords on the state of RE in the United Kingdom (UK) - the first time RE or Religious Instruction (as it was known) was debated in the House of Lords.<sup>2</sup> The attention given to RE during this period not only by the country's politicians but also scholars and the teaching profession highlights the fact that the 1960s was a time of reckoning for RE across the UK essentially because the problems that had been piling on the subject for many decades could no longer be ignored.<sup>3</sup> In Scotland, for example, RE (also tied to the practice of Religious Observance (RO)) faced the *real* danger of disappearing mainly in non-denominational schools.<sup>4</sup> In a desperate attempt to ensure the continuance of RE, parliament (1962 Act) added several clauses to the original Scottish law (1872 Act) governing RE: first, each local authority to seek the consent of local electors (through a referendum) if a school wanted RE removed from its curriculum. Second, schools required to send their RE time-tables to the Secretary of State for Scotland for vetting. Third and last, each education authority was advised to appoint a supervisor (without remuneration) approved by the local Church with power to enter schools at all times to monitor the efficiency of RE.<sup>5</sup> There were other measures that were undertaken, for example, in 1965 the government set up the McLaren Trust scheme (through an act of parliament) in an effort to support the teaching of RE in schools.<sup>6</sup>

And yet despite these efforts, Scottish RE continued to slip further to the margins of the curriculum. The plight of RE was such that the Scottish department of education did not recognise this as an 'academic' subject, with the consequence when the government introduced (in 1965) new areas of study in the primary curriculum, RE was not classified as a distinct subject with the suggestion that it should be *integrated* within other curricular areas.<sup>7</sup> Even when the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS)—world's first teacher professional body—was established (by an act of parliament in 1965, it too did not include

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<sup>1</sup>British Government, "Hansard: House of Lords - Religious Education " (London: HMSO, 1967)., p. 688.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 687.

<sup>3</sup>See Elizabeth Templeton, "Religious Education in a Secular Pluralist Culture," *Religion, State and Society* 27, no. 1 (1999).

<sup>4</sup>Scottish Office, "Moral and Religious Education in Schools," (Edinburgh: SED, 1972).

<sup>5</sup>British Government, "Education (Scotland) Act, 1962," *Hansard* 2, no. 10 & 11 (1962).

<sup>6</sup>Scottish Office, "The McLaren (Religious Instruction) Trust Scheme " (Edinburgh: SED, 1965).

<sup>7</sup>These areas were: Language Arts, Environmental Studies, Art and Craft Activities, Music, Physical Education and Health Education. See "The Primary School Memorandum in Scotland," (Edinburgh: SED, 1965).

RE as a subject for secondary school teacher certification.<sup>8</sup> In the two decades that followed a national conversation in Scotland began about the future of RE, in particular to address two central issues: first, what was to be done to ameliorate the difficulties facing RE, and secondly, how RE could best be reconfigured in a post-Enlightenment schooling environment.

Using the historical inquiry method this paper examines the history of Scottish RE, focusing on the pedagogical and structural neglect of the 1960s and 1970s to the educational promise of the 1980s and 1990s. Issues analysed in this paper form part of a wider qualitative doctoral research which charted the evolution of Scottish RE from 1972 to 2010.<sup>9</sup> A range of documentary sources (triangulation)<sup>10</sup> were analysed, including archival materials (Hansard and statutory statements); government reports and policy papers; curriculum guidelines; reports of professional bodies, Colleges of Education and Churches; relevant books, journal articles and Internet materials. An inductive analysis of the data produced a number of pertinent issues, key areas of which are reported in this paper.<sup>11</sup> A historical inquiry of Scottish RE is necessary not only to highlight important precedents to present-day issues for the subject, and where but where necessary to identify comparative trends with other parts of the UK, particularly England (including Wales) where the *history* of RE has received attention in recent scholarship.<sup>12</sup> For organisational clarity issues analysed in this paper are guided by four research questions. First, what were the historical structural problems for Scottish RE? Second, (if at all) how did Scottish RE survive in the midst of challenges facing the subject? Third, what were the drivers for reform in Scottish RE? In this process, who were the key players? Finally, what practical changes were introduced in the intricate process to transform RE?

## Context

The plight of Scottish RE in the 1960s and importantly changes that were brought to bear on the subject particularly from the 1980s onwards cannot be isolated from the wider intellectual currents and socio-cultural trends in society. In Scotland, as in indeed in most Western countries, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century brought to the fore the impact of dechristianisation (i.e. decline of society's cultural affinity with Christianity rather than disinterest in religion *per se*), a phenomenon that engendered a culture of religious scepticism and doubt.<sup>13</sup> Callum Brown has observed that,

The stewardship of Scottish society is vested in generations which have become overwhelmingly 'secular' in their culture and thinking. The churches may not disappear, but Scotland is sharing with the rest of Western Europe the rapid dissolution of Christian society.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>See British Government, "Teaching Council (Scotland) Act 1965," (London: HMSO, 1965).

<sup>9</sup>This PhD study was supervised at the University of Glasgow between 2007 and 2011.

<sup>10</sup>David Silverman, ed. *Qualitative Research* (London: SAGE, 2009).

<sup>11</sup>Jennifer Attride-Stirling, "Thematic Networks: An Analytic Tool for Qualitative Research," *Qualitative Research* 1, no. 3 (2001).

<sup>12</sup>Stephen Parker and Rob Freathy, "Context, Complexity and Contestation: Birmingham's Agreed Syllabuses for Religious Education since the 1970s," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 32, no. 2 (2011); Rob Freathy and Stephen Parker, "The Necessity of Historical Inquiry in Educational Research: The Case of Religious Education," *British Journal of Religious Education* 32, no. 3 (2010).

<sup>13</sup>See Stephen G. Parker and Rob J. K. Freathy, "Ethnic Diversity, Christian Hegemony and the Emergence of Multi-Faith Religious Education in the 1970s," *History of Education* 41, no. 3 (2011), pp. 382ff

<sup>14</sup>Callum Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 174

Thus, by the 1970s a section of the population claimed that they no longer had a religion, and even many who identified with Christianity rarely attended Sunday Church service. For example, the first (1974) separate Scottish national poll (previously Scotland was included in all UK figures) showed that although 76% of Scots indicated that they were Christians, 45% never or rarely attended a Church service.<sup>15</sup> This suggests that Scots' identification with Christianity in these polls were (and remains) a case of historical tradition rather than an active interest in religion.

In some ways, the predicament in which Scottish RE found itself during this period was a largely a consequence of 'secular' education, in existence since the promulgation of the country's modern system of education by the 1872 Education Act, two years after similar changes in England. The importance of the Act was that it finally brought the state into education by amalgamating the previously chaotic mix of schools (Parochial, Burgh and Private) into a unitary system of state-controlled public schools, of course not without initial opposition by the Catholic and Episcopalian Churches which sought further assurances which were later granted in a landmark Church-State concordance (1918, Act) giving the two Churches judicial powers to manage their own schools, including for the Catholic Church complete control over RE.<sup>16</sup>

Notably, the 1918 Act created a bipartite system of education in Scotland comprising non-denominational ('liberal-secular' in orientation) and denominational (*de facto* Catholic) schools. One of the unintended consequences of this educational structure was that it led to the creation of a dual curriculum arrangement for RE, one Catechetical in nature for Catholic schools and the other, based on general Christianity but with an underlying Presbyterian influence, for non-denominational schools. While RE in Catholic schools was somewhat shielded from the full impact of secularisation owing to the fact its provision was strictly controlled by the Church hierarchy,<sup>17</sup> without such safeguard dechristianisation was to prove catastrophic to the viability of RE in the non-denominational school sector.

Another Scottish peculiarity has been that although the country is part of the UK (since 1707), it has always retained a measure of independence in the management of local affairs, and that as part of this difference Scottish education has always been locally determined. However, despite the rhetoric of difference Scotland has always drawn 'from the same intellectual resources' as the rest of the UK, particularly England.<sup>18</sup> For example, in the 1960s and 1970s intellectual developments in the subject in England particularly through the scholarship of Ninian Smart (phenomenological RE),<sup>19</sup> Ronald Goldman (stages of religious

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<sup>15</sup>Clive Field, "'The Haemorrhage of Faith?' Opinion Polls as Sources for Religious Practices, Beliefs and Attitudes in Scotland since the 1970s," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 16, no. 2 (2001).

<sup>16</sup>Iain Stiven, *Religious Education in Scotland: Blessing or Betrayal* (Edinburgh: Edina Press, 1982).

<sup>17</sup>See Leonard Franchi, "Catechesis and Religious Education: A Case Study from Scotland," *Religious Education* 108, no. 5 (2013).

<sup>18</sup>James Conroy et al., *Does Religious Education Work? A Multi-Dimensional Investigation* (London: Continuum 2013), p. 76.

<sup>19</sup>According to Smart (1927-2001) phenomenological RE entails an 'objective' study of other world faiths not as competitors to Christianity but as comparable to it. See Ninian Smart, *Secular Education and the Logic of Religion* (London: Faber & Faber, 1968).

development theory),<sup>20</sup> Michael Grimmitt (learning ‘from’ and ‘about’ RE theory)<sup>21</sup> and John Hull (educational RE)<sup>22</sup> influenced developments in Scottish RE.<sup>23</sup>

Also worth noting was the influence of professional developments in RE in England on Scottish RE through a number pioneering government reports and RE programmes.<sup>24</sup> The Plowden Report (1967), written with a post-Piagetian tone, is considered as one of the key government reports in the 1960s that championed child-centred learning in England. For RE, the report reiterated the need for new and better ways of presenting religious faith to young children<sup>25</sup> – an issue that was also picked up during the 1967 House of Lords debate on the subject we noted saw earlier. The same year the Plowden Report came out the Church of England and National Commission on RE (NCRE) jointly set up the Durham committee with a mandate to investigate the ‘health’ of RE in England.<sup>26</sup> This development had a cascading influence on Scotland because in 1968 the Secretary of State established a committee with similar aims for Scottish RE – an issue we will return to later in this paper.<sup>27</sup> Correspondingly, when Scottish RE underwent radical reform in the 1990s, it too adopted a neo-confessional approach (i.e. Christian RE with a multi-faith dimension) as had earlier been recommended for RE in England by another influential report known as Schools Working Council Paper 36 (1971).<sup>28</sup> Written under the direction of Ninian Smart this report became a fundamental tenet of modern British RE, and directly influenced the creation of the influential Birmingham syllabus (1975) – the first post-confessional curriculum to emerge in the UK.<sup>29</sup>

### **Statutory implications for religious education**

The findings in this study have revealed that by the 1960s legislation governing Scottish RE, and crucially how this was understood in practice, was a complicating factor for progress in the subject. To fully understand the implications of the law on Scottish RE, it is necessary to highlight key areas of the original 1872 Act (reaffirmed by the 1962 Act with additions):

- RE to be offered to all children in public schools;
- No parliamentary grant to be given in respect of religious subjects in schools;
- RE to be locally determined by Churches and school boards;
- Parental Right to withdraw;

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<sup>20</sup>Heavily influenced by Piaget, Goldman argued for the need to align pedagogy in RE with children’s cognitive development. See Ronald Goldman, *Readiness for Religion: Basis for Developmental Religious Education* (London: Routledge 1965).

<sup>21</sup>Learning ‘from’ religion deals with ‘what pupils learn about themselves in relation to ultimate questions, the transcendence and so on while learning ‘about’ religion deals with ‘what pupils learn about others’ beliefs in relation to the great religious traditions of the world’. See Michael Grimmitt, *What Can I Do in R.E.?* (Great Wakering: Mayhew-McCrimmon., 1973).

<sup>22</sup>Hull is an Australian born UK-based RE scholar who as editor of the *British Journal of Religious Education* (1971-1996) tended to accept papers with a post-confessional outlook for RE. See John Hull, "Introduction: New Directions in Religious Education," in *New Directions in Religious Education*, ed. John Hull (Sussex: Falmer Press, 1982).

<sup>23</sup>John Haldane, "Religious Education in a Pluralist Society: A Philosophical Examination," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 34, no. 2 (1986).

<sup>24</sup>Douglas McIntosh, "Scottish Education, Past, Present and Future," *International Review of Education* 6, no. 1 (1960).

<sup>25</sup>British Government, "Children and Their Primary Schools," (London: HMSO, 1967).

<sup>26</sup>The Durham report (1970) confirmed the extent of curriculum poverty in England. See Durham Committee, "The Fourth R: Report of the Commission on Religious Education in Schools," (London: SPCK, 1970).

<sup>27</sup>Scottish Office, "Moral and Religious Education in Schools."

<sup>28</sup>See Schools Council, "Working Paper 36: Religious Education in Secondary Schools," (London: Evans, 1971).

<sup>29</sup>Parker and Freathy, "Context, Complexity and Contestation: Birmingham’s Agreed Syllabuses for Religious Education since the 1970s."

- Education officials barred from inspecting RE;
- RE to be given at the beginning or end of the school day;
- Schools to send their RE time-tables to the government for approval or disapproval;
- Discontinuation of RE to be done by ballot of the local government electors for the education area and approved by a majority of electors but with rules decided by the government.<sup>30</sup>

In a wider Scottish context in which the law was framed, it is worth noting several issues regarding the aloofness of central government over RE. First, although RE was to continue in schools, the law diminished the role of government regarding the extent to which it was to be involved on matters of RE in schools. Instead, direct responsibility over RE was given to Churches and local school-boards. In addition, the law was crafted at a time of vociferous campaign by the secularist lobby against religion in schools. Although as in England such campaign failed to garner the level of support to achieve such aim,<sup>31</sup> it did influence how the law was to be applied for parents who wished to exempt their children from RE. This may explain why a 'Conscience Clause' was added to give parents not only the right to withdraw their children from RE but also to ensure that such children were not deprived of their secular education. Further, the inability of Presbyterian Churches (which previously owned the majority of parochial schools pre-1872) to agree about what should be done about RE in schools also had ubiquitous influence on how the government was to deal with a *difficult* school subject. Finally, to ensure that the state should not 'interfere' with RE, the absence of government financial support was seen a safeguard in this regard.<sup>32</sup>

From the study's findings legislation had disastrous consequences for Scottish RE. The absence of financial support by the state meant that RE was the only curriculum area that was denied essential resources for its development. One area that suffered perhaps the most as a result of the lack of financial support was the training of RE teachers because as the law was being interpreted the provision of study grants and bursaries for this purpose was seen as government 'interference' in RE and something that would be against the law.<sup>33</sup> Another issue is that although there was some teacher preparation in RE going on in the country's colleges of education, the absence of official or professional recognition meant that even the few teachers who 'trained' in RE never actually taught the subject. Worse was the fact that since RE was an unrecognised area of the curriculum, it did not have a progression ladder (i.e. from teacher to Principal Teacher) as in other subjects.<sup>34</sup> In every possible way Scottish RE had become an unattractive career option for teachers.

Given this situation, who then taught RE in schools? For the most part RE was a subject taught by those whose professional specialism lay elsewhere where a progression ladder existed. The common trend in schools was that RE was something a teacher was given as an 'add on' to their other more 'important' subjects in which they held a recognised professional qualification. Small wonder that headteachers in non-denominational schools found it difficult to find teachers willing to 'add' RE on the list of subject they taught. The government's advice on this issue did not make things any easier either:

Headmasters be left free to assign Religious Instruction to such of their colleagues as are willing and able to take it; and that neither on forms of application nor at interview

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<sup>30</sup>British Government, "Education (Scotland) Act, 1962."

<sup>31</sup>See Rob Freathy and Stephen G. Parker, "Secularists, Humanists and Religious Education: Religious Crisis and Curriculum Change in England, 1963–1975," *History of Education* 42, no. 2 (2013).

<sup>32</sup>Ian Fairweather and J. MacDonald, *Religious Education* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1992).

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Michael Black, *Memorandum on Religious Education in Scottish Schools* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1964).

should any candidate for a secondary school post (other than that of Scripture specialist) be asked whether he is willing to undertake such teaching.<sup>35</sup>

At a time when a growing number of teachers (13% in 1972) in non-denominational secondaries were 'opting out' of RE,<sup>36</sup> the reality in schools was most often than not 'committed' Christians were those willing to teach the subject. In many other cases teachers with an additional academic (not professional) qualification in theology or divinity and increasingly school chaplains as well, became *de facto* RE teachers.<sup>37</sup> As staffing needs became desperate, a willingness to teach RE became an (unofficial) additional requirement for those seeking a teaching appointment in schools essentially because many education authorities "would not be happy about appointing a teacher who was not prepared to teach religious education."<sup>38</sup>

The absence of inspection by education officials was another structural problem for Scottish RE. In practice, this exemption was interpreted to mean that if RE could not be inspected, then equally it could not be assessed by means of a national examination – although there were *ad hoc* cases where some Scottish secondaries (5% in 1972) presented candidates for the English GCE paper in Religious Studies.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the absence of inspection and national assessment (i.e. examination) essentially rendered RE redundant as a school subject. Further, to most parents the 'Conscience Clause' implied that there was something to *object* about the subject. The situation for RE was further compounded by the 'Use' and 'Wont' clause in the law, which effectively had left schools with the latitude to determine the amount of time they set for the subject. As a consequence, in many schools (except Catholic) the amount of time devoted to RE had been reduced to almost negligible proportions such that by 1972 most non-denominational secondary schools were allotting only one period of RE per week with others (32%) not teaching the subject at all.<sup>40</sup>

The law governing RE or at least as it was applied in practice meant that government's hands were essentially tied, leaving it in effect unable to do anything lest under the law any *involvement* be construed as 'interference' in RE. The ambiguity of the law on RE was an issue that was well expressed by Edward Taylor (MP for Glasgow, Cathcart) during a parliamentary debate on the future of RE in June 1969, an issue I shall return to briefly in the next section. Comparing the Scottish situation with England, Taylor explained:

The position in Scotland is quite different. We have no inspection whatever [sic]. We are prevented by our law, for historical reasons which are important and, I think, correct, from having any inspection of religious instruction. Our teacher training regulations make no provision for training in religious instruction. We have no examinations under the old law, and the new Scottish Examination Board has not approved an examination in religious instruction.<sup>41</sup>

The law governing Scottish RE had produced a baffling situation for the subject because while it was meant to safeguard the provision of RE, in reality it had unintentionally created a situation which did not allow the state to *intervene* even when an intervention was precisely what was required to deal with the neglect endemic in RE as we shall see in the next section.

## State and status of religious education

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<sup>35</sup>Scottish Office, "Advisory Council on Education in Scotland," (Edinburgh: SED, 1947)., p. 169.

<sup>36</sup>"Moral and Religious Education in Schools.", p. 15.

<sup>37</sup>"Advisory Council on Education in Scotland."

<sup>38</sup>"Moral and Religious Education in Schools.", p. 10.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup>British Parliament, "Education (Scotland) Bill: Religious Instruction," *Hansard* 784(1969)., p. 1368.

Given the statutory implications described in the preceding section, what then were the state (esteem) and status (extent of provision) of RE in schools? Starting with the issue of public esteem, by the 1960s philosophically many Scots had developed the attitude that Bible study was out of sync with the needs of the contemporary child. As such RE had become culturally unpalatable to a sceptical audience, particularly for people concerned with non-denominational schools.<sup>42</sup> Also poor and uninspiring teaching was endemic in RE given the fact that singing hymns and mnemonics of Biblical texts (rather than inquiry and reflective learning methods) were the dominant pedagogical tools.<sup>43</sup> Commenting on these pedagogical shortcomings Jean Coghill said:

The best effort so far, with a very bright class, was to memorise much of Isaiah Ch. 40; then we learned to sing "He shall feed His flock", and the following Easter we held a recital of gramophone records of the appropriate parts of the *Messiah*... A lot of the "extras" supplied for interest will not be remembered, except by the few more thoughtful children (*italics and punctuation in the original*).<sup>44</sup>

In most cases children were not encouraged to challenge and probe what they were taught. Deducing from the materials examined in this study, if any *good* teaching did happen this was down to the dynamism of individual teachers and not to the vibrancy of the subject or the general enthusiasm shown to it by the general body of teachers who offered it.<sup>45</sup> Starved of *any* professional input in many schools the Bible period had become time for learners to do anything else but learn RE - usually used as a time for relaxing or swotting for examinations in other subjects.<sup>46</sup> The irony of the situation was that although by law RE was a compulsory subject in practice it had a marginal relevance to the child's curriculum experience to the extent that in every possible way it had become a school subject in name only.<sup>47</sup>

The overall picture one gets from the examination of relevant documents is that people's perceptions of RE during the 1960s was one of disdain not least for the fact that it was not uncommon to hear people say that the Bible-based confessional RE was inconsistent with the aspirations of a liberal and 'post-Christian' society. It was an issue that was reflected in the protracted parliamentary debates in the House of Commons between March and June 1969.<sup>48</sup> On one hand were those mainly on government side who although agreed that certain changes were necessary in the subject, wished to see Christianity continue to have a prominent status in RE. In this side of the debate there were reiterations that Christians should 'man the barricades' and added weight to the view that "every school day shall start with an act of religious worship, and that every class shall have regular religious instruction according to a syllabus agreed by local committees."<sup>49</sup> On the other side of the argument was the growing voice of those who doubted the necessity of RE, and even called for its abolition. In this 'camp' others such as William Hamilton (MP for Fife West) argued that "we should be very careful not seek to brain-wash children at this or any age without their being in a position to challenge what is being taught."<sup>50</sup> For his part, Peter Jackson (MP for High Peak, Glasgow) queried:

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<sup>42</sup>See Franchi, "Catechesis and Religious Education: A Case Study from Scotland."

<sup>43</sup>See Harold Loukes, *Teenage Religion: An Inquiry into Attitudes and Possibilities among British Teenagers* (London: SCM Press, 1961).

<sup>44</sup>Philip Barnes, *Debates in Religious Education* (London: Routledge, 2012), p. 105.

<sup>45</sup>Scottish Office, "A Curricular Approach to Religious Education," (Edinburgh: SED, 1978), p. 24.

<sup>46</sup>British Parliament, "Education (Scotland) Bill: Religious Instruction," p. 1369.

<sup>47</sup>Scottish Office, "Moral and Religious Education in Schools."

<sup>48</sup>British Parliament, "Education (Scotland) Bill: Religious Instruction."

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1370.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1371.



Why, in this day and age, should the Christian religion have such a position? I am not opposed to the teaching of the Christian religion, but I am opposed to giving it a privileged position. I should like to see a more open approach adopted whereby all religions, all the world philosophies, are taught. I should like to see children given the intellectual equipment to allow them to evaluate other philosophies and one religious approach with another. This is not possible under the present system. Children are expected to undergo an act of worship which many of them find meaningless.<sup>51</sup>

Although in the end the motion to downgrade Christian teaching or abolish RE was not carried, this polarising debate highlighted people's increased frustrations with Bible RE, particularly at a time of great transition in education from the tradition of knowledge transmission to modern approaches of inducting pupils into a dynamic and developing culture.<sup>52</sup> At a time when Scottish education was moving towards Piaget's learner-centred pedagogies (i.e. cognitive theory approaches),<sup>53</sup> the Bible approach was seen to be seriously out of step with post-Enlightenment trends in society. Thus, for a society that was already inherently secular in its outlook, the common practice of expecting children to attend Church service as part of 'doing' RE did little to enthuse children about the subject.<sup>54</sup> Further, the absence of RE specialists in secondary schools meant that there was a wide variation in the way the subject was taught which depended to a large extent by the interests of the form-teacher (who was expected to teach it regardless of specialisation) and whether that teacher was a 'good' Christian or whether he/she was 'free thinking' and thus harbouring personal and philosophical objections to religion (as most did).<sup>55</sup>

### **Survival in the midst of turbulence**

Despite the challenges facing Scottish RE described in the previous sections, it is important to observe that the subject did not *completely* disappear in public schools. The question is why? Without a doubt the fact that the provision of RE was encased in legislation provided an important level of support that guaranteed its endurance in school.<sup>56</sup> Although the position of RE in many schools was merely a matter of *existence* rather than *quality*, the point is that legislation was a sure safeguard for the continuation of RE in schools. The apparent paradox was that while the law unwittingly contributed to the poverty of RE as a school subject, the same law prevented its disappearance from schools.

Another level of support for the subject came from the work of non-statutory organisations that were established specifically for RE. The first of such groups was the 'Scottish Joint Committee on Religious Education' (SJCRE). Established in 1918, SJCRE had representatives from the Churches (except Catholic), education department, local authorities and 'Educational Institute of Scotland' (EIS). One of its major contributions was that it promoted the teaching of RE not only through organising occasional meetings for interested parties but importantly giving practical advice to teachers on curriculum matters in the subject. At a time when there was no curriculum of any kind resembling a national document, in 1929 SJCRE formulated an RE syllabus (with revised versions appearing in 1964, 1968, 1970 and 1975) for schools that wished to use them.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 1372-3.

<sup>52</sup>See Alex Rodger, *Education and Faith in an Open Society* (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1982), pp. 1-4.

<sup>53</sup>See David Hartley, "The Convergence of Learner-Centred Pedagogy in Primary and Further Education in Scotland: 1965-1985," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 35, no. 2 (1987).

<sup>54</sup>SJCRE, *Religious Education: Primary School Handbook* (Edinburgh: Scottish Joint Committee on Religious Education, 1975).

<sup>55</sup>Scottish Office, "Advisory Council on Education in Scotland."

<sup>56</sup>British Government, *Education (Scotland) Act, 1969* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1969).

<sup>57</sup>SJCRE, *Religious Education: Primary School Handbook*.

Perhaps a more lasting contribution of SJCRE towards the support for RE was that it had a forward looking agenda for the subject. Concerned by the problems plaguing the subject, SJCRE identified a number of areas in need of urgent improvement in RE: the place of RE within the wider curriculum; pupils' entitlement to RE as well as to the option of Religious Studies; the need to keep RE centred on the pupil and his needs, rather than on an abstract body of knowledge. SJCRE also stressed that even in a seemingly secular context RE had a role to play in society and therefore was to be supported as a subject worthy of study. SJCRE promoted the view that if RE was to come of age, fundamental changes were needed regarding the way the subject was conceptualised, designed and provided. Given that many children had little or no Church background, SJCRE suggested that there was a need to teach RE an *open* way to help pupils understand different world views, whether these were religious or not.<sup>58</sup>

The establishment of the Association of Teachers of RE (ATRES), in 1962, by a nucleus of RE teachers in Fife (under the leadership of Edwin Towhill, lecturer at Dundee College), was an important development towards the 'survival' of Scottish RE.<sup>59</sup> Similar to SJCRE, primary aim of ATRES was to promote the teaching of RE, particularly in secondaries where the neglect was most acute. Equally, ATRES also had forwarding-looking aims for the subject. For example, it suggested that RE should be recognised as a teaching subject for which teachers should be trained and professionally acknowledged. In an effort to raise the profile of the subject, ATRES proposed the need for the subject matter of RE to be defined more clearly. It also touched on the issue of time allocation proposing that RE should be given adequate time within the curriculum. It raised the point that if RE was to be attractive as a career option for teachers there was a need for Principal Teachers to be appointed in the subject. Further, it recommended the need for examination in RE at higher level and also the necessity of appointing advisers for the subject. ATRES had a newsletter, which at the suggestion of John Hull became known as *Scottish Journal of Religious Education* (the publication is no longer in circulation). The publication included issues of general interest for teachers and schools about the future of RE. In addition, ATRES organised annual conferences in various parts of the country which were (and remain) well attended by teachers.<sup>60</sup>

During a period in the history of the subject when only a handful of teachers were willing to 'train' as RE specialists because of the reasons already stated in this paper, Colleges of Education remained firmly supportive of RE. The support they gave was not only towards teacher preparation in the subject but more widely on the provision of the subject in schools. For instance, lecturers from the colleges were active committee members in the various RE organisations such as SJCRE and ATRES. Their contribution in these organisations was critical because it provided leadership and insight into how these organisations could take forward the agenda for change in RE. The contribution of staff from the colleges to ATRES was especially noteworthy because four out of five chairpersons of ATRES, from its inception in 1962 until 1976, were lecturers from the Colleges of Education.<sup>61</sup> The annual RE teachers' forum convened by Dundee College during 1970s-1980s was also a great boost for the subject.

These professional meetings were important because they dealt with curriculum matters in RE when teachers did not have any official curricular guidance about the subject. For its part,

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<sup>58</sup>SRC, "Religious Education and Religious Observance," (Glasgow: Strathclyde Regional Council, 1981).

<sup>59</sup>In 1987 the college merged with Aberdeen College to form Northern College. In 2001 Northern College joined the University of Dundee as part of its new Faculty of Education and Social Work.

<sup>60</sup>ATRES, "History of the Association of Teachers of Religious Education in Scotland," [http://www.atres.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=71&Itemid=114](http://www.atres.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=71&Itemid=114). (2010).

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

Moray House College<sup>62</sup> organised an important conference in July 1967 (attended by teachers, scholars and Church representatives), which debated the issue of national examinations in RE at a time when assessment in the subject was still barred under the law.<sup>63</sup> As part of its support for RE, in 1981 Jordanhill College<sup>64</sup> devised an optional curriculum of RE for use in secondary schools.<sup>65</sup> In 1982 the college undertook a government-funded project to investigate how RE could be effectively assessed, and in particular with the aim of helping to equip teachers with more rigorous and reliable techniques of assessment in RE.<sup>66</sup>

Undoubtedly, the strongest pillar of support for RE was that given by the Churches. In situations where Churches felt that the subject was under ‘threat’ they were quick to remind the government about the statutory guarantees for the subject. Given the tone of some of the political debates over RE in the late 1960s Churches had *real* concerns about the future direction of the subject. For example, during the sitting of Parliament (House of Commons) in June 1969, the government introduced a bill for the purpose of repealing Section 9(2) of the 1962 Act. This particular aspect of the law had mandated schools to submit for the Secretary of State’s approval or disapproval their timetables indicating the exact times RE and RO were offered.<sup>67</sup> The government’s contention was that this section of the legislation was no longer relevant because it was set up for the purpose of protecting children of minority denominations from having their secular education undermined by the holding of RE at indiscriminate periods throughout the day. The government further explained that with the passage of time this had been taken erroneously to be a safeguard for the continuation of RE in schools. In any case the government further argued that there had been no reported cases of schools ever submitting such timetables for his approval or disapproval.<sup>68</sup>

While the Church of Scotland (which historically has had a more liberal attitude on the place of religion in contemporary life)<sup>69</sup> accepted the government’s assurances that the repeal of this “provision would in no way jeopardise the statutory safeguards in Section 8 of the Act,”<sup>70</sup> the Catholic Church had reservations about the proposed repeal of this aspect of the law.<sup>71</sup> In a letter to the government, Cardinal Thomas Winning (the Archbishop of Glasgow) wondered whether *safeguards* would be maintained to ensure the continuation of RE:

I ask that this subsection be retained... [because] if the subsection be repealed, a Headmaster might be in a position to reduce to almost negligible proportions the time for religious instruction or observance, particularly in Schools which were not provided by the Local Authority under Section 17(2) of the 1962 Act and which are Public Schools used by Catholic children.<sup>72</sup>

The effect of the Archbishop’s intervention was such that during the House of Commons debate in question, Betty Anderson (MP for Renfrewshire East) cautioned that “we should pay attention to people when they feel as strongly as they do in this connection.”<sup>73</sup> Although in the end the repeal of Section 9(2) was carried, given the sensitivity of the issue the

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<sup>62</sup>In 1998 the college joined Edinburgh University as its new School of Education.

<sup>63</sup>C. Mackay, ed. *Curriculum and Examinations in Religious Education* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968).

<sup>64</sup>In 1993 the college joined Strathclyde University as its School of Education.

<sup>65</sup>JCE, "Religious Education for the 80's: S1-S4," (Glasgow: Jordanhill College, 1981).

<sup>66</sup>"Assessment in Religious Education," (Glasgow: Jordanhill College 1985).

<sup>67</sup>British Government, "Education (Scotland) Act, 1962."

<sup>68</sup>British Parliament, "Education (Scotland) Bill: Religious Instruction," *ibid.* 784(1969).

<sup>69</sup>Field, "The Haemorrhage of Faith?" *Opinion Polls as Sources for Religious Practices, Beliefs and Attitudes in Scotland since the 1970s.*

<sup>70</sup>British Parliament, "Education (Scotland) Bill: Religious Instruction," p. 1367.

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1367.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1371.

government met representatives from the Catholic and Presbyterian faith communities and assured them that the repeal of this section of the law would not in any way infringe upon Section 8(2) of the 1962 Act (i.e. continuance of RE and RO in schools) as originally framed in the 1872 Act. However, by amending parts of the legislation the government had set an important *precedent* that the law could be amended if there was reasonable justification that doing so was in the best interest of the subject.

Among Presbyterian Churches, the support provided by the Church of Scotland towards RE should also be highlighted. In 1987 the Church set up a working committee to investigate the provision of RE in non-denominational schools. Based on the findings of the committee's report the Church made a number of recommendations to the government about the future of RE. First, it stressed the need for intensive training of teachers in RE. Secondly, it emphasised the necessity for schools to have clear policies on RE. Third, it pointed out the need to preserve RE on school timetables. Finally, it suggested the need to develop a range of quality textbooks and other materials for RE.<sup>74</sup>

### Drivers for reform in religious education

As already noted the contribution of leading British scholars such as Smart, Goldman, Grimmitt and Hull to the overall development of RE in the UK, including Scotland, is widely acknowledged. What is less recognised in the discourse is the comparable influence of Scottish scholars on RE on 'home' soil. From the examination of relevant literature, the scholarship of Elizabeth Kinniburgh, J.W.D. Smith and Alex Rodger was identified and will now be appraised. Writing in 1970, Kinniburgh (lecturer, Dundee College) stressed that the use Bible stories as the only pedagogical tool was catastrophic to the reputation of RE. According to her this was the reason why many children became indifferent and even hostile to religion such that when they reached the end of their primary education they did not want to hear *any more* about RE. Kinniburgh called for a new pedagogy in RE that not only addressed these pedagogical failings but also ensured theological rigour in what children were taught. She emphasised that *good* RE should be one that encourages children to make judgements (theological criticism) and also one that allows those who do not accept a Biblical viewpoint to make this judgement on the basis of *knowledge*. Similar to the ideas advocated by Smart during that time,<sup>75</sup> Kinniburgh also suggested that in some cases children should be allowed to *detach* from the central premises and figures of the Bible.<sup>76</sup>

Perhaps the most prominent Scottish scholar during this period was Smith (1899-1987), a long-time academic at Jordanhill College. Among many of his works Smith's book *Religious Education in a Secular Setting* (1969)—republished in 1975 as *Religion and Secular Education*—is considered as one of the key texts that set the tone for a new direction in RE not only in Scotland but in the rest of the UK.<sup>77</sup> Smith critiqued much of the RE theory and concluded that there was need for a rethink on the purpose of RE in secular schools. For example, he argued that Christian education was no longer possible in what he called 'post-Christian' communities. He pointed out that society had become secularised and as such only a minority of the population still interpreted life in Christian terms. Except possibly in Church schools, Smith was emphatic that education with a Christian aim was no longer possible. He stressed that education could still be *religious* but this could only be possible if Christian and non-Christian educators could together develop a *common policy* for RE. In

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<sup>74</sup>Church of Scotland, *Christian Teaching in Scottish Schools* (Edinburgh: Blackwood Pillans, 1988).

<sup>75</sup>Smart, *Secular Education and the Logic of Religion*.

<sup>76</sup>Elizabeth Kinniburgh, "Religious Education - an Attempt at a Theological Appraisal," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 23, no. 2 (1970).

<sup>77</sup>Dennis Bates, "Secularity, Agape and Religious Education - a Critical Appreciation of the Work of J. W. D. Smith," *British Journal of Religious Education* 14, no. 3 (1992).

order for this to happen he called for a *radical* change of approach that is open to the idea of including personal development and non-religious issues in the practice of RE.<sup>78</sup> In fact, some of Smith's ideas were cited in Working Paper 36, a report which as we have seen was one of the earliest to push for a new direction for RE in British schools.

For his part in his book *Education and Faith in an Open Society* (1982), Rodger (lecturer, Dundee College), called for a new function of RE that took cognisance not only of radical social changes in society but also trends in the general aims of education. He stressed that in a contemporary setting RE should be treated as an integral part of education justified on the principles of understanding, openness and autonomy noting that "pupils are to be helped towards personal autonomy and commitment to what they themselves come to perceive to be true, worthy and right."<sup>79</sup> Although he supported the position of Christianity as *primus inter pares* in RE, his view was that such teaching should be done both 'objectively' (treating all faiths fairly) and 'subjectively' (helping children understand believers' beliefs and feelings). In short, he suggested that RE should serve the child's search for meaning, value and purpose in life not only for the believing child but also for the non-believing one.<sup>80</sup>

Despite the passionate calls for reform in RE exhibited in the works noted above, the main problem was that the government was prevented by the country's laws from 'interfering' in the subject. It is here that the contribution of William Ross, the Secretary State, 1964-1970 and again 1974-1976, is widely recognised because at the risk of his political career he took a bold step and intervened – although at the time such action was against the country's laws and national tradition.<sup>81</sup> Realising the gravity of the challenges facing RE, in 1968 Ross appointed a special committee (under the chairmanship of William Millar, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Aberdeen) with the mandate to investigate the health of RE in its entirety. The Millar Report (1972) highlighted four main issues that stood in the way of progress for RE: little or no educational rationale; lack of professional recognition by both the GTCS and Education Department; absence of inspection; absence of assessment. Further, the report criticised the Bible-centred approach and called for a child-centred approach in RE. It doubted the educational value of an evangelical RE and suggested that relevant RE should follow modern trends in education in which the child was at the centre of learning. More specifically, it considered whether RE would be made more effective by the introduction of a national examination in secondary schools – although in the end the report did not recommend examinations in RE.<sup>82</sup>

The overall significance of the Millar Report was that it established RE and not Religious Instruction as *educationally* respectable. It made practical proposals for reform whose implementation helped to improve the condition of RE. Following one of its recommendations at the beginning of 1975 local authorities began to appoint advisors to oversee RE, another important first for the subject. In time the government created the post of a national specialist within the inspectorate directorate to oversee RE. To the delight of groups such as ATRES, the Millar Report's recommendation that professional training of pre-service RE teachers should commence was implemented straightaway. In turn, this also led to the professional recognition of the subject by GTCS. In fact, following this recognition teachers who already had a qualification in RE were given professional recognition *ex post facto* by GTCS.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>J.W.D. Smith, *Religious Education in a Secular Setting* (London: SCM Press, 1969).

<sup>79</sup>Rodger, *Education and Faith in an Open Society*., p. 64.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>British Parliament, "Education (Scotland) Bill: Religious Instruction."

<sup>82</sup>Scottish Office, "Moral and Religious Education in Schools.", pp. 37, 44-53.

<sup>83</sup>"Learning and Teaching in Religious Education," (Edinburgh: SED, 1986).

The role of professional committees was another important area towards the development of Scottish RE. These committees arose from the Millar report's recommendation that oversight of the RE curriculum should be undertaken by a group of voluntary professionals in RE (i.e. teachers and lecturers rather than by SJCRE). This led to the birth of the 'Consultative Committee on the Curriculum' (CCC) with full government support. In turn, in 1974, CCC established the 'Scottish Central Committee on RE' (SCCORE), a unique development because it had representatives from both denominational and non-denominational schools. SCCORE went on to produce two important reports whose impact on RE has been noteworthy. The first (1978) of these reports known in short as Bulletin 1 clarified the educational aim for RE. It argued that in an emerging post-modern Scotland it was necessary that within the span of a child's school life, he/she should be able to explore religion in a way that would include other faiths.<sup>84</sup> In 1981 SCCORE produced another key report, Bulletin 2, which boldly stated that RE should proceed on the assumption that not all pupils will or should have *positive* religious convictions or commitment, thus suggested that learning RE should be based on knowledge, understanding and evaluation.<sup>85</sup>

While Bulletin 1 did not want RE to deal with moral issues, Bulletin 2 disagreed and suggested that issues such as rights, responsibilities, ethics and so on should be an integral part of RE. The general appeal of the professional reports was that these were working documents which offered practical help to schools and teachers for a subject that had been neglected for a long time. In addition, in 1987 SCCORE produced a report which advised that if schools were "to realise the full potential of the religious mode in the formal and informal curriculum" there was urgent need to every school to draw up an RE policy.<sup>86</sup> Such a policy would explain how RE would fit into the life of the school as a discrete subject, in core courses and certificate options, as a contributor to social and moral education without losing the distinctive strand of the religious dimensions and so on.<sup>87</sup>

As part of the process to professionalise RE, Colleges of Education received special funding from the government to increase their in-take of pre-service secondary school RE teachers. Some colleges like Jordanhill introduced short courses for secondary teachers who had qualified in other subjects but wanted to retrain in RE, a subject where teacher shortage was most acute – for example, in 1976 there were only 149 RE specialists for a secondary school population of 400,000.<sup>88</sup> With a steady trickle of specialist teachers coming out of the Colleges of Education and taking on the subject professionally in schools, the future began to appear bright for RE.

On reflection, teacher committees in RE and the 'training' of specialists tell us more about the rise of the *professional teacher* who was keen to bring quality, recognition and professional pride to the subject. Now increasingly taught by expert teachers (by 1992 the number of RE specialists had risen to 323)<sup>89</sup> who were actually interested in the subject as their bread and butter, and with many of them quickly promoted to the newly created posts of Principal Teacher, the momentum for transformation in RE had gathered a seemingly irresistible pace.

One intractable issue that remained unresolved was the absence of a national assessment of RE in the form of examination. This issue received serious attention in a government report called the Mann Report (1977) which recommended that to improve the image of RE in the eyes of the teaching profession, examinations would have to be introduced like any

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<sup>84</sup>"A Curricular Approach to Religious Education."

<sup>85</sup>"Curriculum Guidelines for Religious Education," (Edinburgh: SED, 1981).

<sup>86</sup>SCCORE, "Management Issues in Religious Education" (Dundee: Dundee College, 1987)., p. 2.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Scottish Office, "A Curricular Approach to Religious Education.", p. 25.

<sup>89</sup>Fairweather and MacDonald, *Religious Education*., p. 104.

other curriculum subject at 'O' and 'Higher' Levels.<sup>90</sup> However, despite the suggestions made by the Munn Report and indeed other interest groups such as ATRES, no substantial practical changes could be undertaken in this regard. The main reason was that key statutory restrictions placed on the subject had remained unchanged, even when the 1980 Act, which governs Scottish RE to this day, was announced.<sup>91</sup> It is also here where George Younger (1931-2003), the Secretary of State from 1979 to 1986, intervened with the view to amend, once for all, prohibitive aspects of the law governing RE. Younger argued, and rightly so, that RE could no longer be treated as a subject set apart from other disciplines in the school curriculum and thus resolved that introducing examinations in RE remained the only progressive action to be undertaken. However, as a prelude to this development there was the sober realisation that inspection into RE had to be introduced first, something that would be acting against the national tradition and the law.<sup>92</sup>

Younger tabled a motion in the House of Commons with the view to seek parliamentary approval to amend the prohibitive aspects of the law governing Scottish RE, an issue that was heavily debated during 1981 and 1982 parliamentary sessions.<sup>93</sup> In the end a consensus was reached to have Section 66(2) of the 1980 Act (i.e. barring education officials from inquiring into instruction in religious subjects or from examining any pupil in religious knowledge or in any religious subject or book) repealed so that *real* progress could come to RE. But before changes could be effected the government consulted with Churches, local authorities and other interested groups about the state of RE in schools. What the government found was surprising because when the various groups were asked as to why RE had been excluded from inspection, nobody could give a clear answer as to why this was the case. This confirmed the government's position that there were clearly no contemporary reasons for the continuation of the exclusion to inspect and assess RE.<sup>94</sup> As part of the formal process to amend Section 66(2) of the law, an 'Order in Council' was issued in 1982 and came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1983.<sup>95</sup> Following this landmark development, Scottish RE was inspected for the first time in 1983 in readiness for the first 'O' Grade examination in 1984, and in 1986 the first 'Higher' examination in RE was written.<sup>96</sup>

### **Change and innovation in the curriculum**

Although by the mid-1980s the ground work had been done, it would take several years before meaningful changes were introduced and implemented in RE. It is here that Michael Forsyth (later Lord), a controversial Conservative Party politician, is widely recognised as the person behind key reforms in Scottish education in the 1980s and 1990s. It is worth observing that although Sir Malcolm Rifkind and Ian Lang were the relevant Secretaries of State in Scotland during 1986-1990 and 1990-1995 respectively, it was Forsyth their Minister of Education (and later as Secretary of State himself, 1995-1997) who helped to implement some of the key reforms in Scottish Education during this period. In relevant literature Forsyth is described as a 'keen Thatcherite' because of his ardent support of Margaret Thatcher's (UK Prime Minister, 1979-1990) Conservative Party policies. Thatcher is widely known for her controversial 'new' right ideology of a prosperous 'Christian' Britain. Some commentators have claimed that Forsyth wanted Scottish education to be reformed in alignment with wider reforms occurring elsewhere in the UK, principally involving a more

<sup>90</sup>Scottish Office, "Structure of the Secondary School Curriculum," (Edinburgh: SED, 1977).

<sup>91</sup>British Parliament, "Education (Scotland) Act, 1980," (London: National Archives, 1980).

<sup>92</sup>Fairweather and MacDonald, *Religious Education*.

<sup>93</sup>See British Parliament, "House of Lords Debate: Scottish Religious Education " *Hansard* 424(1981).

<sup>94</sup>"House of Commons Debate: Religious Education " *Hansard* 32(1982).

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>SCCORE, "Management Issues in Religious Education ".

centralised approach in the management of education.<sup>97</sup> Forsyth's critics have bemoaned the fact that such reforms were only meant to break the grip of progressive Scottish education.<sup>98</sup> The 'Christian' agenda in British national politics during the Thatcher years also explain why despite the acknowledgment of religious diversity and inevitability of secularisation in education, the new RE framework that emerged in the UK from the 1980s onwards took a markedly neo-confessional path.

Mirroring developments in England,<sup>99</sup> in 1987 the Scottish administration published a consultation paper which explored a range of opinions regarding what children should be learning in primary and the first two years of secondary school.<sup>100</sup> A year later, the government introduced the structure of a new national curriculum commonly known as '5-14' programme. As part of the process towards this programme, a number of *ad hoc* 'Review Development Groups' (RDGs) were established for the various curricular areas of which the one responsible for RE was called 'RGD 5'. Similar to what Working Paper 36 and the 1988 Reform Act had suggested for RE in England, in Scotland RDG 5 proposed an ethics-based neo-confessional framework for RE. A draft curricular guideline of the new RE programme was sent for comment to the various stakeholders such as Humanist Society, Church of Scotland, Catholic Church and representatives of Chinese, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities.<sup>101</sup>

While RDG 5 was in the process of creating a curriculum structure for a new RE programme, the government became acutely aware that certain issues about the provision of RE needed clarification. There was less clarity regarding how RE in non-denominational schools was to be taught, how it was to be resourced, how teacher education was to respond to staffing issues in RE, how much time schools were to spend on RE - and even whether RE was to continue in schools, and if so, what form it should take and how often it should be done. In 1991 the government published a definitive policy for the provision of RE in Scottish schools. Known as Circular 6/91, this policy stated that RE should be based on Christianity (as a tradition of Scotland) although advising that as far as necessary schools could add other religions depending on the religious mix of children. It advised local authorities to help schools revise their RE policies and also suggested 5% (in primary) and 10% (in secondary) of notional minimum time to be spent on RE in these two stages of education. For certificated courses it suggested 80 hours over two years to be spent on RE. In order to increase staffing levels of RE specialists the policy obliged the government to provide a special grant (from 1<sup>st</sup> April 1991) for teachers of other subjects who wanted to re-train in RE.<sup>102</sup>

In May 1991 RDG 5 published a set of curricular guidelines called 'Religious and Moral Education' (RME).<sup>103</sup> These guidelines reiterated the need for RE to be based on tradition, locality and school policy and proposed that RE should be based on Christianity, Other World Religions and Moral Values.<sup>104</sup> Perhaps taking a cue from Smith's proposition that Scotland needed a *common* framework of RE, in November 1992 the government published a *single* RME curriculum for *all* schools when previously non-denominational and Catholic

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<sup>97</sup>See Jeremy Moon and Jenna Sindle, "Reading Thatcher," *Australian Journal of Political Science* 29, no. 2 (1994); P. Crang and R. L. Martin, "Mrs Thatcher's Vision of the 'New Britain' and the Other Sides of the 'Cambridge Phenomenon'," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 9, no. 1 (1991).

<sup>98</sup>See Walter Humes, "The Significance of Michael Forsyth in Scottish Education," *Scottish Affairs* 11, no. Spring (1995).

<sup>99</sup>Templeton, "Religious Education in a Secular Pluralist Culture."

<sup>100</sup>Scottish Office, "Curriculum and Assessment in Scotland: A Policy for the 90s," (Edinburgh: SED, 1987).

<sup>101</sup>"Religious and Moral Education 5-14: Working Paper 7," (Edinburgh: SED 1991).

<sup>102</sup>"Religious Education and Religious Observance in Schools," (Edinburgh: SED, 1991).

<sup>103</sup>"Religious and Moral Education 5-14: Working Paper 7."

<sup>104</sup>"Curriculum and Assessment in Scotland: A Policy for the 90s."



schools had each a different curriculum of the subject.<sup>105</sup> However, the Catholic Church rejected the single curriculum approach in its entirety, essentially because the Church saw this as a clear infringement of the 1918 concordat.<sup>106</sup> After negotiations with the Church hierarchy were concluded to resolve the matter, in 1994 the government produced a separate Catholic 5-14 programme.<sup>107</sup> The Catholic programme maintained the standard nomenclature 'RE' because as far the Church was concerned, moral values are inherent in and not separate from RE.<sup>108</sup> Although aspects of other religions were included, in the main this was a Catechetical curriculum based on the Church's *Veritas* school programme. In all, the 5-14 RE curriculum (both Catholic and non-denominational) could claim to have *educational* aims because its framework was in-line with the principles of children's cognitive development.<sup>109</sup>

### **Final remarks**

The purpose of this paper has been to examine the history of Scottish RE during 1962-1992, a period characterised by both despair and hope for the subject. To that extent it has described the plight of RE in the 1960s and 1970s exemplified by constraints such as statutory ambiguities; aloofness of central government over RE; lack of professional recognition; and the perversity of neo-liberal attitudes towards religion in public education. However, the analysis of the data also identified several factors from the 1980s onwards, which not only ensured the survival of RE but crucially engendered practical changes for the subject. Some of the notable changes included the following: inspection by education officials; assessment and national examinations; recognition by GTCS and professionalisation of teachers; introduction of new material content in the 5-14 RE curriculum. Taken together, these changes opened a new chapter which placed RE on a comparable footing with other areas of the 1992 curriculum.

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<sup>105</sup>"5-14: Religious and Moral Education," (Edinburgh: SED, 1992).

<sup>106</sup>"5-14: Religious and Moral Education (Catholic Schools) - Consultation Document," (Edinburgh: SED, 1993).

<sup>107</sup>"Catholic Religious Education 5-14," (Edinburgh: SED, 1994).

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>109</sup>James Conroy, "Religious and Moral Education," in *Scottish Education: Second Edition - Post-Devolution*, ed. T.G.K. Bryce and W.M. Humes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).